Besides, the Cochin Port Trust has submitted another proposal to the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for up-gradation of the infrastructure facilities at Cochin Fishing Harbour at an estimated cost of Rs. 176.20 lakhs. The Proposal for up-gradation includes construction of a new net repair shed, providing bathing and toilet facilites, improvement to the drainage facilities, surfacing the wharf and repairs of roads, dredging the wharf frontage etc. State Level Export Promotion Committee of Kerala Government has approved the proposal and an amount of Rs. 170 lakhs has been released under the Assistance to the States for Infrastructure Developments for Exports (ASIDE) scheme of the Ministry of Commerce.

(c) to (e) A sum of Rs. 593.60 lakhs was provided to the Cochin Port Trust for development of the major fishing harbour under the scheme. The fishing harbour has been completed and put to use since September, 1978. In addition, as mentioned above, an amount of Rs. 170 lakhs has also been provided under ASIDE scheme for up-gradation of the existing fishing harbour out of which, a sum of Rs. 85 lakhs has already been incurred.

Kollam-Kottapuram Project

484. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Inland Water way Project "Kollam-Kottapuram" is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith expected cost of the porject;

(c) whether funds have been earmarked for the project;

(d) the time by which this project would be operational; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The West Coast Canal from Kollam to Kottapuram alongwith Udoygmandal and Champakara Canals (205 kms.) has already been declared as a National Waterway in February, 1993.

(b) The development works envisaged are (i) development of navigational channel with 2 metre depth having width of 32 metre in narrow reaches and 38 metre in wider reaches,(ii) terminal facilities at

11 locations and (iii) 24 hours navigational aids. Upto March, 2004, approximately Rs. 60 crore have been spent on development of this waaterway. Another Rs. 75 crore is anticipated to be spent to make this waterway fully operational.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) The developmental activities related to capital works such as dredging, land acquisition, navigational aids, permanent terminals etc. are in progress and are expected to be completed by the end of 10th Plan. Maintenance of navigation channel and other infrastructural facilities, however, would be continuous process.

Sandheads in Bay of Bengal

485. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the MINISTER OF SHIPPING be pleased to state: (a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the Sandheads in the Bay of Bengal have become the Waterloo of many a ship in the Indian waters;

(b) whether it is a fact that Merchant ships continue to sink at regular intervals here;

(c) if so, whether Government are aware of the fact that Sandheads are well within India's Maritime limits and these sinking ships are unleashing environmental and pollution hazards affecting marine life and shipping routes; and

(d) the action Government proposes to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Several cases of sinking of ships have been reported from Sandheads of Bay of Bengal. Since 1998, seven cases have been reported out of which two pertain to sinking and five to vessels running aground.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Vessels have run aground near shipping routes, yet they do not pose any immediate threat to navigation. However, to ensure removal of such wrecks in future Kolkata Port is insisting that ships which call at the port are covered under Protection & Indemnity (P&I) Insurance before allowing their entry. Port State Control inspections are now being carried out more vigorously so that entry of substandard